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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 07/03/07

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ARTICLES:

- (1) Kyuma resigns

ASAHI.COM  
July 3, 2007

Defense Minister Kyuma, elected to the Lower House from the Nagasaki

Constituency No. 2, on the afternoon of July 3 met with Prime Minister Abe and conveyed his intention to resign to take responsibility for stating in a speech that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the US "could not be helped." The prime minister accepted his resignation. Kyuma offered an apology, taking back his remark. However, as criticism of Kyuma spread in the ruling camp, the prime minister has judged that he should not allow the issue to become prolonged any longer with the Upper House election due to be publicly announced on July 12. Kyuma is the third minister to be replaced in the nine months since the inauguration of the Abe administration. As it stands, the Kyuma flap is bound to inflict a severe blow on the Abe administration and the ruling parties, which are already suffering from the pension premium payment record errors.

Emerging from his meeting with the prime minister at the Kantei, Kyuma told reporters: "I have caused a great deal of trouble to the citizens of Nagasaki. I am sorry I seem to have failed to obtain understanding. I, therefore, have decided to step down to take responsibility." According to Kyuma, Abe said, "You have been of great help. It is regrettable that you have to resign," but he did not persuade him to stay on.

Tomihisa Taue, mayor of Nagasaki City, on the morning of July 3 visited Kyuma at the Defense Ministry and hand-delivered a letter noting: "The remark has trampled on the feelings of the victims of the atomic bombings. Nagasaki City, the bomb site, cannot overlook such a remark. We call on the government to deeply recognize that the use of nuclear arms cannot be allowed whatever the cause and to make efforts to abolish nuclear arms." Kyuma made an apology, "I am sorry I have caused trouble to the citizens of Nagasaki City and Nagasaki Prefecture and the victims of the atomic bombings throughout the country." He also conveyed his intention to consider

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declining an invitation to attend the Nagasaki Atomic-Bomb Victims Memorial Peace Prayer Ceremony on Aug. 9.

In the meantime, a growing number of ruling party members had called on Kyuma to voluntarily step down. The New Komeito had planned to hear explanations from Kyuma after a cabinet meeting on the 3rd. However, it later turned down the offer as being too early to do so, since internal discussion on the issue was not over yet, according to a senior official. Deputy head Toshiko Hamayotsu the same day issued a comment seeking his resignation: "I personally think that Defense Minister Kyuma's statement is grave. It is qualitatively different from the remark made by MHLW Minister Yanagisawa. I would like Mr. Kyuma to reach a wise judgment on what to do with himself."

Secretaries general of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or

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Minshuto), the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the People's New Party (PNP, Kokumin Shinto) had planned to visit the Kantei to call for Kyuma's resignation.

Kyuma on June 30 made a speech in Kashiwa City, Chiba Prefecture. Commenting on the atomic bombings of Japan by the US military, he noted: "Many Nagasaki people suffered by the US atomic bombing, but I think that the bombing in Nagasaki put an end to the war. I think it was something that couldn't be helped."

Following this remark, the government and the ruling parties tried to quell the uproar, with LDP Secretary General Nakagawa telling Kyuma to offer an apology and retract the statement. Kyuma held a press conference in Nagasaki and retracted his comment. The prime minister on July 1 indicated his intention of not questioning Kyuma's responsibility.

However, opposition parties demanded his dismissal. An increasing number of ruling party members also called for a strong approach to Kyuma. Calls for Kyuma's dismissal gained momentum in Nagasaki Prefecture, his home constituency. Giving consideration to the possible impact of the remark on the upcoming Upper House election, the government and the ruling parties decided that his resignation

would be necessary.

Kyuma was first elected as a Lower House member in 1980, after serving at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and as a Nagasaki Prefectural Assembly member. He has been elected nine times since then. He served as Defense Agency director general during the Hashimoto Cabinet, after serving as state secretary for the Transport Ministry and LDP deputy secretary general. He took office as Defense Agency director general last September, after serving as acting secretary general and Executive Council chairman of the LDP. He became the first defense minister when the Defense Agency was upgraded to the Defense Minister in January this year.

(2) Kyuma's remarks about atomic bombings: Has the habit of saying, "couldn't be helped"; Frequent calls for his dismissal; Arguments shallow, explanations less persuasive

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Full)  
July 3, 2007/07/03

Defense Minister Kyuma said in a speech that the dropping of atomic bombs by the United States on Japan "couldn't be helped" -- a comment that has caused a huge commotion. Kyuma apologized for the

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remarks in a press conference on July 1. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe summoned Kyuma to his office and reprimanded him yesterday. The government now is earnestly trying to calm down the situation, but opposition party members and the residents of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, both of which were atom-bombed, are still angry at Kyuma. Officials in the government and the ruling camp are increasingly concerned about a negative impact of the remarks on the upcoming House of Councillors election.

Kyuma's controversial statement cropped up in a speech he delivered on June 30 in a symposium on "peace" at Reitaku University, Chiba Prefecture.

Kyuma made the remarks in answering a question after reiterating the propriety of the Shigeru Yoshida-led cabinet's decision to join the liberal camp during the Cold-War period. Later, Kyuma told reporters: "I wanted to say that Japan, which was unable to read the Soviet Union's real intentions, made a serious miscalculation." This explanation could be taken as implying the Japanese government's responsibility for causing serious damage to the Japanese people due to its improper judgment in ending the war.

But the defense minister just said in the speech that the US dropped the atomic bombs with the aim of preventing the Soviet Union from participating in the war, adding: "In the worst case, the Soviet Union could have seized (Japan), including even Hokkaido." These remarks could be interpreted as indicating that the war ended because the US dropped atomic bombs, resulting in preventing an invasion by the Soviet Union into Japan and urging Japan to join the liberal camp.

Kyuma has so far made a series of remarks that are a deviation from the government's policy on Japan's relations with the US. He once criticized the US government's decision on the Iraq war as based on a wrong judgment. Now, he is under heavy fire for his remarks taking the side of the US.

A senior member of the Upper House Liberal Democratic Party attributed Kyuma's series of controversial comments to his personal characteristics, saying, "His arguments are always shallow." In apologizing in a press conference on July 1, Kyuma said: "I said various things, like a commentator. That was the problem"; and "'The phrase 'couldn't be helped' was vague." But later, he grumbled to his aide: "'couldn't be helped' is my favorite phrase."

When asked by reporters about the opposition camp's demand for his resignation as cabinet minister, too, Kyuma simply replied as if he didn't care about it at all, "Such a situation always happens." Last night, however, Kyuma reportedly told his aide in a weak-spirited way: "I feel sorry for causing you trouble. I have been off my guard probably because I am getting old."

Kyuma knows only a bit of historic background

Comment by Kazutoshi Hando, author of the History of Showa

The arbitrary argument in the United States is that it dropped atomic bombs in order to make Japan quickly surrender. There is no need for the Japanese defense minister to take the US side's view. Many Japanese people must be feeling the same. Japanese people should always claim and must continue to claim that the use of inhumane weapons is unacceptable for the sake of humans.

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Defense Minister Kyuma seems to take the view that the US and the Soviet Union fought in order to make Japan surrender, but the US had agreed in the Yalta Conference (in February 1945) to allow the Soviet Union to join the war three months after Germany's surrender. The US had ordered the dropping of atomic bombs before the Potsdam Declaration (in July 1945). The Japanese government was moving to terminate the war even from before the US dropped atom bombs. Both the US and the Soviet Union knew about it. Defense Minister Kyuma knows only a bit of the historic background and does not correctly understand it.

(3) Editorial: Support rate at 28 % , Tension appears as election nears

Asahi (Page 3) (Full)  
July 3, 2007

In Asahi Shimbun's latest public opinion poll, the Abe cabinet's sluggish support rate has finally dropped into the 20 % range. When the Koizumi cabinet was in office, the support rate never dipped below 30 % , and although polling methods differed, even the Mori cabinet fared better. It has been 6 years since a cabinet support rate was this low.

There are only 4 weeks left until the Upper House election, so it must be quite a shock to Prime Minister Abe that he is in such "dangerous waters."

In this latest poll, 28 % of respondents said they support the Abe cabinet. Abe's support rate began to drop in late May after the eruption of the pension fiasco and the suicide of former farm minister Matsuoka. However, even then his rating didn't fall below 30 % . In other media polls, Abe's popularity has taken a similar dive.

The reasons for this decline are not difficult to imagine.

In an all-night session of the Diet last weekend, the government and the ruling camp, over the objections of the opposing camp, pushed through laws regarding the breaking up of the Social Insurance Agency and a bill to remove the statute of limitations on pension claims. They also passed legislation to help retiring bureaucrats find new jobs and a revision to the Political Funds Control Law.

The prime minister most likely wants to be praised for these achievements. However the results of the poll offer a completely opposite view. 59 % of respondents said they "do not appreciate" the government's response to the pension fiasco, and 49 % said that their "anxiety has not been relieved."

As the distrust and dissatisfaction towards the government's handling of the pension fiasco continues to grow, the declining support rate may be a reflection of the public's disgust with strong-arm tactics and the use of numerical superiority to forcefully push legislation through the Diet.

Another interesting aspect regarding the results of the poll is the increase of unaffiliated voters to 53 % . When the Abe cabinet was first inaugurated, unaffiliated voters were around 40 % , but over time, they have slowly increased. This is a change from the Koizumi cabinet, which drew unaffiliated voters to its ranks during the

battle over postal privatization. The current situation is a return to the old Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

It has become clear that voters have turned a critical eye towards the Abe cabinet's nine months in office.

What is truly pitiful is the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto). Their support rate has been stagnant at 16 % . Minshuto uncovered the problem of "vanished pensions," yet 45 % of respondents said that they "do not appreciate" Minshuto's handling of the issue. Minshuto must reflect on the seriousness of their inability to translate dissatisfaction with the Abe cabinet into support for their own party.

LDP leaders, perhaps in a conscious response to the declining support rate, commented that "the Upper House elections are a midterm evaluation of the Abe administration." They are probably putting up protective barriers to prevent the election results from directly necessitating the prime minister's resignation.

However, will the Upper House elections really just be a "midterm evaluation"? Amidst increasingly critical public opinion, the upcoming elections could go beyond a mere "midterm evaluation" and serve as a judgment of the Abe cabinet as a whole.

The prime minister has also upped the voltage. (Abe in a debate with Minshuto president Ichiro Ozawa) "Who is better suited to be prime minister - me or Mr. Ozawa?" In response, Ozawa showed his resolve by stating that he is "betting his political life."

If tension has appeared in the political realm, that is just fine.

(4) USGC chairman: Biotech crops key to stable supply of food

Jiji Press ONLINE NEWS  
June 27, 2007 at 19:48

Visiting US Grains Council (USGC) Chairman Vic Miller stated in an interview with Jiji Press on June 27 that the expansion of ethanol production had caused corn prices to rise, and the gap between demand and supply of corn to widen worldwide. He noted that one decisive factor in securing sufficient supply of corn would be to disseminate biotech crops even more. He continued that the price hike was primarily attributable to rising energy costs.

(5) USGC chairman plans to increase corn production primarily by using GM corn

HOKKAIDO SHIMBUN (Page 9) (Full)  
June 30, 2007

Visiting US Grains Council (USGC) Chairman Vic Miller arrived in Japan on June 29 and visited dairy farmers at Naganuma Town in the Sorachi Area in Hokkaido. Miller mentioned the worldwide shortage of grains caused by the expanded production of bio-ethanol and said that corn acreage in the United States was on the increase, indicating that the production of genetically-modified (GM) corn would be one key to securing the supply of corn.

The purpose of his visit to Hokkaido was to exchange views with dairy farmers using imported feed and others. The USGC consisting of 90 relevant organizations, including growers' bodies, aims for

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promoting exports of US-grown corn, sorghum, and barley.

Speaking of the expansion of the amount of land devoted to planting crops, Miller stressed: "A sufficient amount of crops will be produced to meet demand" As a key to a stable supply of crops, he cited the cultivation of GM corn, which needs a small amount of agricultural chemicals and is less affected by the weather, by noting: "Corn is likely to occupy a larger part of the area planted in the future."

According to the US Department of Agriculture, GM corn is grown in 70 % of the land devoted to corn. This percentage is expected to increase even further.

(6) Interview with US Grains Council Chairman Miller on soaring corn price; Price to be stabilized in fall

HOKKAIDO SHIMBUN (Page 10) (Full)  
July 3, 2007

US Grains Council Chairman Vic Miller, 60, now visiting Japan to publicize American corn, gave an interview to the Hokkaido Shimbun on June 29. In the interview, Miller took a view on the price of US corn, which has skyrocketed due to demand for ethanol: "The corn crop is expected to increase in the fall. So the prices of animal feed will stabilize." The following are the details of the interview.

-- Dairy farmers in Hokkaido are concerned about the soaring price of US corn.

Miller: The skyrocketing corn price is attributed to a sudden increase in bio-ethanol production. There is growing concern about our corn supply in the world. But there is no need to worry about it. According to the US Agriculture Department's latest estimate, the crop acreage for this year will increase by 12-15 % from last year. Since we have so far been blessed with magnificent weather, the crop will likely increase.

-- Do you think the corn price will stabilize?

Miller: I think so. Actually the market price has been stable for the last several days, reflecting the expected boost in the harvest. Japan imports annually 16 million tons of corn, mainly for feed. About 25 % of the 16 million tons are consumed in Hokkaido. I visited Japan to promise a stable supply of corn to our important customers.

-- How do you see Japanese consumers' deep-rooted aversion to genetically modified (GM) products?

Miller: Seventy-two % of US-grown products are GM products. I think the number of GM foods will increase more and more. The reason is that GM products have a great advantage in that they are environmentally friendly because they need less use of pesticides. We have produced GM crops for more than a decade. Although American people have continued to eat them, there has been no report of any health hazard. I hope that Japanese consumers will make a right decision based on the scientific evidence.

(7) Is US Japan's true ally?

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SHUKAN SHINCHO (Pages 178, 179) (Abridged slightly)  
July 5, 2007

By Yoshiko Sakurai

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) lawmaker Keiichiro Asao asked an interesting question in a House of Councillors Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee session on June 19. The question was about the Voice of America's (VOA) May 12 report on US Pacific Command Commander Timothy Keating's alleged indication that the United States was willing to help China build aircraft carriers.

Keating said in the May 12 press conference: "If China is to push ahead with a program to build aircraft carriers, we will help them build a carrier to the degree that they seek and the degree that we are capable." Having a lunch with Vice Adm. Wu Shengli, commander of China's navy, ahead of the press conference, Keating reportedly explained in detail to the Chinese side about complexity and difficulty building and maintaining aircraft carriers.

To Asao's question a month and week after the VOA broadcasting, the

defense minister replied that he knew nothing about Keating's remarks. Asked about his perception of Keating's statement, Defense Minister Kyuma said: "I have nothing to say about it."

Explaining that Japan has told China that possessing aircraft carriers would be extremely costly and that adding a new area would take a toll on other areas in a limited budget, Kyuma, said: "We will keep an eye on China's program."

Was there any need for Keating and Kyuma to point out the need for an enormous budget? China must be aware of such an aspect.

China's view on aircraft carriers has been clear. Arguing that China possessing aircraft carriers is not a matter of its economic or technological power, the People's Liberation Army Daily March 17, 1989 issue noted:

"Since the emergence of carrier-borne airmen at the turn of this century, it has been proven through combats that no country can secure maritime control without gaining maritime air supremacy and that maritime control goes hand in hand with maritime air supremacy. Carrier-borne airmen are the main body of navy seamen, and aircraft carriers are bases for the activities of carrier-borne airmen. Whether or not the country needs aircraft carriers is not a matter of building equipment but a matter of whether or not it needs to gain maritime air supremacy." (Yomigaeru Chuugoku Kaigun (Reviving Chinese Navy) by Shigeo Hiramatsu)

China eyes an era after annexing Taiwan

Possessing aircraft carriers is China's national objective transcending such factors as costs and economic might. Shigeo Hiramatsu, a China expert, noted:

"By the mid-1970s, China reached for the South China Sea and made the Paracel Islands part of its territory. China's desire for building strong navy and possessing aircraft carriers has been evident since those days."

On January 11, 1974, China declared that all islands in the South China Sea -- the Spratly, Paracel, Macclesfield, and Pratas Islands

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-- were part of its territory. On January 17, the country attacked the South Vietnam forces, and placed the Paracel Islands under its control on January 20.

Ostensibly it was a battle between China and Vietnam, but behind it, there were the Soviet Navy's intention to advance into Asia and China's determination to block it. At the time, the United States was struggling in the Vietnam War and Britain had withdrawn from the east of the Suez Canal since the late 1960s. Taking advantage of the situation, the Soviet Union continued to expand its forces to the Indian Ocean.

Taking the Soviet Pacific Fleet's passage through the Strait of Malacca that led to the reopening of the Suez Canal as a threat, the People's Daily reported on May 12, 1974

"(The Soviet Union's) maritime supply line from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf has been shortened from 11,000 miles to 2,000 miles due to (the reopening of the Suez Canal). The Soviet Union is expected to further strengthen its naval power in the Indian Ocean, as well."

China's fear of the Soviet Union grew stronger, and China established diplomatic relations with the United States in January 1979 to counter the Soviet Union. China back then even urged Japan to increase its defense spending to GNP from 1 % to 2 % to be prepared against the Soviet threat. In 1985, China bought the 16,000-ton aircraft carrier Melbourne from Australia and opened it to the public.

Hiramatsu noted:

"China also made public the aircraft carrier Varyag it bought from

Ukraine. Beijing was careful not to let the international community harbor unnecessary doubts by making it clear that it was too early for the country to build its own flattops, while exhibiting its eagerness to possess carriers. There is no doubt that they examined the Melbourne inside out. After all, it was the first aircraft carrier to Chinese military personnel, although it was old in the eyes of other countries. I believe they scrapped it after absorbing all the necessary knowledge."

The international community reacted coldly to China's purchase of carriers, saying, "They are decrepit." Such a reaction was exactly what China wanted.

Hiramatsu explained:

"China is cautious. Although they say possessing aircraft carriers is their long-cherished wish, their immediate goal is annexing Taiwan. Until that is achieved, China doesn't need aircraft carriers. I don't think they will possess carriers."

US, Japan as targets of China's operations

The situation is likely to turn around once China annexes Taiwan. China's long-term strategy is to gain control of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean after placing the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the western Pacific under its control to eventually face off with the United States across the western Pacific. Because China eyes the maritime control of the entire Pacific Ocean, they do not acknowledge the Okinotori islets as Japan's territory. That's why

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they have repeatedly conducted maritime surveys in waters around those islets without acknowledging them as Japan's territory or in Japan's exclusive economic zone. In order to vie for control with the US Navy, China must completely know its territorial waters.

Hiramatsu also took this view:

"After annexing Taiwan, China is expected to advance into the western Pacific and beyond by making full use of aircraft carriers. At that point, they will build their own aircraft carriers to nurture an elite overseas navy. In my view that would be sometime between 2020 and 2030 -- before 2050 at the latest, the country's centennial."

At this point, Japanese people must take special note of the 2010 China national defense program compiled by the China University of National Defense, which goes:

"China will not commission an aircraft carrier before 2010. However, the country will be able to build a semi-aircraft carrier similar to Japan's Okuma-class amphibious assault ship to acquire experience in building and using aircraft carriers to meet demand for amphibious operations. The United States and Japan that may intervene in Taiwan and a Taiwan naval battle will be main targets of China's operations over the next decade."

Pointing out the United States and Japan as China's immediate enemies, the program also reads:

"Ground-based fighters will be able to accomplish their missions in operations (against Japan and the United States)."

This exposes the Chinese military's excess confidence. However, given the US commander's comment expressing his country's willingness to help China build its own aircraft carriers and the attitude of the Japanese defense minister, who did not know the commander's vital statement for over a month, it is only natural for China to have full confidence in itself.

SCHIEFFER